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Johnson, Bundy Play Cat-Mouse

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WASHINGTON — McGeorge Bundy, White House foreign affairs adviser, has sent President Johnson a memo informing him that he has received an offer to become president of the Ford Foundation. But so far the President's reaction has been total silence.



Bundy Informed sources said Bundy is quietly waiting for the President to call him in "at his leisure" to talk about the matter.

Sources close to Mr. Johnson said, however, that "the next move is up to Mac," and that — rather than bring the subject up himself — the President is quietly waiting to hear from Bundy again.

This is the current status of what official Washington considers one of the greatest cat-and-mouse games played here in years.

Bundy was offered the \$75,000-a-year job to head the nation's wealthiest and most influential philanthropic organization early this month by its board chairman, John J. McCloy. His reply was that he would not know if he would be available until he had talked to Mr. Johnson. By that measure, he still does not know.

INTENTIONS?

The unstated implication which has been widely drawn from this is that the former Harvard undergraduate dean is desirous of knowing whether Mr. Johnson has any long-range plans to appoint him eventually to some higher post within the

executive branch.

Both officially and unofficially, Bundy continues to maintain silence on the matter. He will not even confirm or deny that the offer has been made.

The impression he creates among his associates at the White House is that there is no need for any hurried decision or response from the President, who, after all, is a busy man.

Officially, the Texas White House continued to maintain the whole affair must not be very serious since Bundy has not yet seen fit to bring the matter up for detailed discussion.

CHOICE IS HIS

Unofficially, Mr. Johnson is said to believe that anyone of Bundy's talents and capacities who has given five years to public service ought to have the right to decide on his own best course.

Apparently, the impression the President seeks to create is that he values Bundy greatly but his loss would not mean the end of the world.

Who would succeed him? His chief deputy, Robert Komer? His brother, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy? White House press Secretary Bill Moyers?

Komer is officially described as a "longtime government analyst," which means he used to work for the Central Intelligence Agency before he came to the White House.

William Bundy is considered a lively prospect.

The betting is 50-50 on Moyers. Some sources said that Mr. Johnson, conscious of criticism that he lacks sophistication in foreign affairs, would hesitate to replace Bundy with a Texan.

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